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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 05/19/08

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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, May 16

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
May 17, 2008

08:40

Attended a relevant ministers' meeting on revenues for road projects in Diet.

09:00

Attended a cabinet meeting, Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura and Foreign Minister Koumura remained. Afterwards, issued an appointment letter to Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary for Crisis Management Ito, jointed by Machimura.

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10:26

Attended a meeting of the Council on National Social Welfare at Kantei. Afterwards, met with Masajuro Shiokawa, manager of the 700-Person Committee for Promotion of Administrative Reform for Rebuilding Japan. Later, met with LDP Research Commission on Foreign Affairs Yamasaki.

13:00

Attended a session of the Upper House Special Committee on ODA.

15:21

Met with members of the Committee on Measures for Rehabilitation of Genkai Island, joined by House of Representatives member Seiichi Ota..

15:52

Met with former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yosano at Kantei.

16:30

Met with Ambassador to African Development Conference Odano and MOFA International Cooperation Bureau Director-General Bessho. Afterwards, met with Machimura.

17:41

Arrived at Kantei residence.

17:52

Attended a session of the Council on Rebirth of Education at Toshi Center Building in Hirakawa-co.

19:43

Arrived at Kantei residence.

Prime Minister's schedule, May 17

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
May 18, 2008

Morning

Stayed at Kantei residence.

12:58

Met with New Komeito Representative Ota.

18:58

Met with Junko Edahiro and Takeshiro Suekichi of the Council Climate Change, joined by Special Advisor to Cabinet Kusaka and member Jitsuro Terashima.

Prime Minister's schedule, May 18

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
May 19, 2008

Stayed at Kantei residence all day.

4) Joint statement on assistance to Afghanistan to be released at G-8 foreign ministerial: Coordination with related countries underway

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
May 18, 2008

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The government yesterday firmed up a plan to release a joint statement on assistance for the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan at a foreign ministerial of the G-8 to be held on June 26-27 in Kyoto. It has started undertaking coordination with related countries. The envisaged joint statement will be mapped out separately from the chairman's statement at the foreign ministerial.

Its judgment is that in view of the present situation in which the Taliban militants are activating anti-government activities in Afghanistan, it would be necessary to indicate the G-8's fresh resolve to fight terrorism and support the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The envisaged joint statement would point out that with Al Qaeda, an international terrorist group, having established bases in the southern, south-eastern and eastern parts of Afghanistan, which have a border with Pakistan, public security in those regions is of particular concern. Based on that notion, it will incorporate the G-8's policy of emphatically tackle the economic development and stabilization of those border regions. To be precise, the joint statement will likely include as cardinal features the promotion of the construction of schools and roads, the removal of land mines, evacuation assistance and food aid.

5) Prime Minister Fukuda to engage in a marathon of meetings at TICAD4: 50 leaders over three days for a total of 17 hours

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Excerpt)
May 19, 2008

Prime Minister Fukuda will meet individually with 50 leaders or other representatives from African countries attending the African Development Conference (TICAD4) held in Yokohama City May 28-30. He is expected to spend a total of 17 hours in such meetings over the three-day period, which one senior Foreign Ministry official called, "An unprecedented marathon of meetings at the summit level."

Attending the conference will be representatives of 53 of the 54 countries in Africa. Forty five countries will send summit-level representatives: 35 heads of state, seven prime ministers, and three vice presidents.

6) Prime Minister Fukuda calls for increasing ODA budget

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
May 17, 2008

Ken Uzuka

At a session yesterday of the Upper House Special Committee on Official Development Assistance (ODA), Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda discussed Japan's ODA to Africa that he plans to announce at the upcoming fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in Yokohama City, which is to open on May 28. He revealed that the government was making arrangements to increase ODA to Africa, noting: "We must not let leaders of participating countries leave Japan disappointed. I would like to deal with the matter appropriately." Fukuda was replying to questions posed by Kohei Otsuka of the major opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ).

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The special committee also adopted a resolve to increase the current

level of ODA, which is 0.17 PERCENT to gross national income (GNI) in 2007 to 0.7 PERCENT to GNI in 2015.

7) Fukuda to announce 1 trillion yen in aid to Africa for global-warming countermeasures during African Development Conference

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Full)
May 19, 2008

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda will announce Japan's assistance plan for Africa in the opening ceremony of the 4th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD4), which will start on May 28 in Yokohama. According to a draft revealed yesterday, the government will donate a total of 10 billion dollars, or approximately 1.04 trillion yen, to African countries over the next five years to finance measures to fight global warming, as well as create a new loan system to promote investment (by Japanese firms) in Africa.

Over the coming five years, the government is also willing to double official development assistance (ODA) disbursements to Africa and the values of trade with and investment in Africa. Japan is willing to display its leadership in containing global warming and assisting Africa - major agenda items at the Group of Eight Summit (the Lake Toya Summit) in July.

Included among the measures to be announced by Prime Minister Fukuda will promoting infrastructure construction and Japanese companies' investment in Africa by reducing risks involved. To that end, Fukuda will propose improving the nation's current trade insurance system and establishing a new loan system called the "Africa investment facility."

Great attention is being focused on whether an agreement will be reached on a new international framework following the 2012 expiration of the Kyoto Protocol in the upcoming conference. Japan intends to respond to African countries' desire to seek economic growth as well as reduce greenhouse-gas emissions by helping them develop grain species suitable for arid land with high temperatures and introduce technological know-how to curb greenhouse gas emissions and clean energy.

As measures to promote trade, the government plans to promote Japanese firms' investment, as well as to involve 12 countries in the "One Village One Product Movement," which originated in Oita Prefecture.

8) Africa aid: Government plans to double private-sector investment over five years; 600 million dollars for measures to prevent infectious diseases

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
May 18, 2008

The government has decided to present its goal of doubling private-sector investment in Africa over the next five years at a meeting of the fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) to be held in Hamamatsu City, starting on May 28. Since Africa has abundant natural resources, there is a high

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potential of private companies carrying out projects there. The government will help them engage in official development assistance-related projects. It will also release a plan to disburse another 600 million dollars for measures to deal with infectious diseases as part of a comprehensive measures to assist Africa.

The government will shortly discuss its plan at a meeting of the Council on Overseas Economic Cooperation (chaired by Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda) and incorporate it in an action program to be adopted at TICAD. Its aim is to help Africa become self-reliant, by accelerating its economic growth through the boosted inflow of private companies' money.

The average amount of money Japanese companies invested in Africa in

a year in a five-year-period from 2002 to 2006 reached 1.723 billion dollars. The government wants to raise that amount to 3.446 billion dollars by 2012.

As government-sponsored aid measures, the government will adopt projects related to the consolidation of infrastructure, such as road construction, after taking into account private companies' needs. It will also improve systems of loans provided by the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and trade insurance. It will also announce a plan to significantly increase ODA to Africa in order to back its effort to consolidate infrastructure.

9) Japan's aid to Africa: "Aims to double rice production in Africa in 10 years

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
May 19, 2008

Ken Uzuka

The government will unveil a plan at the upcoming fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in Yokohama City slated for May 28 to double rice production in Africa over the next 10 years. Given acutely soaring food prices, Japan intends to make good use of its long experience in rice cultivation. Japan will work together with the World Food Program (WFP) in this aid and it will use official development assistance (ODA) and obtain financial support from Bill & Mellinda Gates Foundation organized by Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates.

In Africa, escalating food prices are becoming a serious issue with riots occurring in the Cameroons and Cote d'Ivoire. Japan has decided to offer a total of 10 billion yen in emergency aid to Africa. In addition to that, Japan intends to demonstrate its attitude of aiming to improve the structural problems related to the food issue in Africa, for instance, the need to improve the self-sufficiency ratio in food and farmers' income by showing a long-term aid framework under which Japan's unique technology will be better used.

Japan's plans include (1) expanded Africa rice cultivation promotion initiative, (2) rice varieties improvement; (3) spread of irrigation technology; and (4) production by adoption of Japan's agricultural cooperative system and improvement in distribution.

Japan plans to spread the cultivation of New Rice for Africa (NERICA), which is better adapted to African weather and which produces a good crop, and double the current rice production of some

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14 million tons in 2006 in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Japan International Cooperation Agency has already tackled this sort of effort in Uganda.

10) Food aid: Government considering expanded use of imported rice in stock; Working-level talks with U.S. to be held shortly

NIKKEI (Page 5) (Full)
May 17, 2008

Asian and African countries are having difficulty procuring rice due to the sharp rise in international prices. Following the move, the government will consider expanding rice aid using rice which it imports under the minimum-access quota system. Tokyo and Washington are now undergoing coordination with the possibility of holding working-level talks as early as later in the month. The U.S. will likely approve the use of such rice for an aid purpose, although it has strongly called for its domestic consumption. Since the plan requires coordination with countries that are experiencing a rice shortage and fiscal measures, the government will consider it, while monitoring the international situation.

Japan has been importing minimum-access rice since it was urged to open its market during talks at the World Trade Organization (WTO). The government annually imports approximately 770,000 tons without imposing a tariff from the U.S., Thailand and China under such a

quota through trading houses. Of that amount, U.S. rice accounts for about 40 PERCENT . Japan has sent part of imported rice to developing countries as aid. It now intends to expand that amount.

Domestically, part of minimum-access rice is sold as staple food as well as for a processing purpose, such as making miso paste, and feed grains. The amount of stocks as of the end of October last year stood at 1.52 million tons. The accumulated total of imports is 8.32 million tons, of which 2.2 million tons have been used for aid. The sharp rise in rice prices in developing countries is now an international issue. In a bid to put the problem to rest, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) recently released a statement approving exports of minimum-access rice. Working-level talks between the governments of Japan and the U.S. will likely focus on the use of minimum-access rice for aid purposes.

11) Ishiba has yet to visit Okinawa due to new refueling legislation, Aegis accident and other problems

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
May 19, 2008

It has been almost eight months since Shigeru Ishiba assumed office as defense minister last September, but he has never visited Okinawa Prefecture in that capacity. It has been a custom for the defense minister to visit Okinawa ahead of other prefectures to demonstrate the government's consideration to the southernmost prefecture, which hosts the bulk of U.S. bases in Japan and plays an important security role. Ishiba's response is extremely unusual at a time when Okinawa is being shaken by the plan to realign U.S. forces.

Over the last 10 years, 11 defense chiefs out of a total of 12 have visited Okinawa within four months after assuming office. Ishiba previously became defense chief in 2002 and he visited the prefecture in two months after assuming office. It is considered natural in the Defense Ministry for the defense minister to travel

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to the prefecture soon after assuming the post.

Ishiba's assumption of office was followed by a spate of problems and scandals, such as heated Diet debates on a new Antiterrorism Special Measures Law governing the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean, an underreport by the MSDF of the amount of fuel Japan supplied to a U.S. supply ship, a scandal involving a former vice-defense minister, and an Aegis destroyer's collision with a fishing boat. Ishiba has been busy dealing with those events.

The planned relocation of Futenma Air Station to the Henoko district in Nago, the biggest issue in Okinawa, has been stalled due to the prefectural government's request to move the replacement facility into the sea. The focus is on when Ishiba will visit Okinawa to break the gridlock in the Futenma issue.

12) Jiji poll: 49 PERCENT think prime minister should dissolve the Lower House if censure motion against him is adopted by the Upper House

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)
May 18, 2008

In a Jiji Press opinion survey conducted on May 9-12, 49.2 PERCENT of respondents said that Prime Minister Fukuda should dissolve the Lower House for a snap general election in the event a censure motion against him is adopted by the Upper House. In addition, 21.7 PERCENT said the cabinet should resign en masse, while 14.1 PERCENT indicated that there was no need for a general resignation or Lower House dissolution.

The survey was conducted face-to-face toward 2,000 men and women across Japan, with 66.9 PERCENT of them giving valid answers.

By party, 64.5 PERCENT of DPJ supporters and 41.0 PERCENT of LDP supporters said the prime minister should dissolve the Lower House, in comparison to 48.1 PERCENT of those with no party affiliation.

Asked for the timing for Lower House dissolution, 60.0 PERCENT pointed to by the end of the year. Of them, 22.1 PERCENT said it should be in the summer after the July G-8 Summit, 20.6 PERCENT pointed to from the fall through the end of the year, and 17.3 PERCENT favored "immediate" dissolution.

Meanwhile, 62.7 PERCENT expressed opposition to the reinstated provisional tax rates on gasoline and other items, while only 29.2 PERCENT voiced support for it.

13) DPJ Secretary General Hatoyama again expressed intention to file censure motion against Prime Minister Fukuda

SANKEI (Page 5) (Excerpt)
May 19, 2008

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama appearing yesterday on the NHK program, Sunday Talk, stated: "The (Fukuda) Cabinet support rate is now at 20 PERCENT . From the nation's perspective, they are asking that something be done, that politics be changed. We have no intention of doing nothing and just let the current Diet session end."

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He repeatedly expressed the intention of pursuing the Fukuda Cabinet on such issues as the controversial medical system for the elderly and the road tax revenues.

14) Local LDP chapters turning away from Fukuda; 22 prefectures want a new party president for next election

ASAHI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
May 17, 2008

Timed with the Lower House's re-adoption of legislation governing road-related tax revenues, the Asahi Shimbun has conducted an opinion survey covering the 47 prefectural chapters of the Liberal Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Japan. In the survey, only 12 LDP prefectural chapters said that the party should face the next Lower House election under Prime Minister Fukuda, who is also LDP president, while 22 prefectures indicated the need for a new party president. Local chapters seem to be turning away from Fukuda, reflecting sagging support ratings for his cabinet.

The survey was conducted on May 12-15, including May 13, the day a bill amending the Road Construction Revenues Special Measures was readopted, toward the secretaries general and others of two parties' prefectural chapters.

In the wake of the party's defeat in the April 27 Lower House Yamaguchi by-election, the view is gaining ground in the LDP that Prime Minister Fukuda is not appropriate to serve as the party's "poster boy" for the next general election. In the survey, many expressed views writing the prime minister off, with a Saitama member saying: "Too many bad things have happened since Mr. Fukuda took office. It's difficult to face the next election under him." Local calls for an early resignation of the former Mori administration, which was suffering from flagging support, led to Mori's resignation as prime minister. Local opinions cannot be discounted. LDP Secretary General Bunmei Ibuki in a press conference yesterday defended Fukuda, saying, "The prime minister has been working hard." Another LDP officer expressed a sense of alarm, noting: "Local organizations are close to the public and sensitive to public opinion. Shuffling the cabinet is a must."

Asked about persons fit to become a new party president, prefectural chapters named only one person: former Secretary General Taro Aso. Seven prefectures, such as Iwate, Gifu, Osaka, and Hiroshima explained: "Mr. Aso is a seasoned politician who is good at speeches. Considered to be the solar opposite of Mr. Fukuda, he will be well received by the public."

15) Ruling parties team agree on revisions to law that would penalize by imprisonment even the simple position of child

pornography

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Excerpt)
May 17, 2008

The Liberal Democratic Party and New Komeito's ruling parties project team to reconsider the child prostitution and child pornography law held a meeting on May 16 and reached general agreement on amending the law. Although the current version of the law does not ban the simple possession of child porno, such as photos or film obtained for one's personal hobby, this will be banned, and violations will be subject to imprisonment.

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16) MEXT intends to specify "Takeshima as Japanese territory" in teaching guidelines for junior high school curriculum guidance

MAINICHI (Page 26) (Full)
May 19, 2008

Takahiro Kato

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology (MEXT) decided to specify in teaching guidelines for new junior high school curriculum guidance (which are to be put into complete practice in fiscal 2012) Takeshima (Dokdo in Korean), a group of small islets both Japan and South Korea have claimed, as "Japan's inherent territory." The teaching guidelines have no legal binding force like curriculum guidance has, but textbook publishers compile textbooks based on teaching guidelines. Given this, MEXT's new policy is likely to significantly affect the way teachers instruct in classrooms.

In line with modifications to curriculum guidance, MEXT compiles teaching guidelines for each subject for elementary, junior and senior high schools. Teaching guidelines for junior high schools are scheduled to be prepared by July.

In the past, there were cases where curriculum guidance and teaching guidelines for junior high schools made mention of the Northern Territories, but there have been no cases until now of referring to Takeshima in curriculum guidance and teaching guidelines out of consideration with South Korea.

Regarding the question of whether to specify Takeshima, in 2005, then Education Minister Nariaki Nakayama said in his Diet reply: "It should be specified in curriculum guidance." Since then MEXT had discussed the matter. New curriculum guidance was unveiled this past February, but MEXT reportedly refrained from announcing this sort of specification in part because the timing of the announcement coincided with the timing of the inauguration of Lee Myung Bak as new president of South Korea.

SCHIEFFER